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EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS IN EXTENSION TEACHING
AS APPLIED TO HOME ECONOMICS*

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Thirty-two years ago I entered the field of extension work, and to-day I hear, as I did then, "How shall we measure the results of our work?" "We are not reaching as many people as we should", "I am somewhat discouraged with the progress I am making." These and various other expressions indicate an interest and zealously to transmit to the people in terms of practices those operations which the institutions and leaders in home making have proved to be best. But we should not be in such haste that we forget to take the mass of the people with us, nor should we forget that much of the success of our work is in growth, not in a spasm or revolution that would change practices in a day, a month, or a year. It is necessary to keep a tight rein, and proper to have some measure by which we can judge the rapidity of our progress.

In the first place, a new standard should be set up to begin our work in home economics at an earlier period and with a larger mass of young people. If this be done, then our demonstrations will grow year by year into the homes of the land. In support of this new standard it may be pointed out that the expectation of life for the girl 14 or 15 years old is over 46 years. This means that if, in our extension work, we demonstrate to young people of that age, and they accept the practice and put it into effect in the homes of their mothers, these young girls have a chance to exercise this practice and to have it become a habit with them, expressing itself in their lives and in their homes, for 46 more years. In this early life the mind is impressionable, full of aspiration, and forward-looking. This is the habit-forming stage. Consequently, if extension demonstrations and practices are fixed through 4 to 5 years of work with young people, the practice is more likely to be accepted and held than it would be if it were attempted to establish new habits 30 years later with mothers whose habits and thoughts, and perhaps prejudices, are more or less fixed.

The proposition to begin our extension work with girls earlier may also be supported by the fact that the line indicating the check in the deaths of young people in the rural population shows itself very strikingly at the age of 15 when only about 13,000 out of 100,000 born, have died. The line of mortality sustains itself not exactly horizontally, but declines somewhat until the age of 45 to 50 is reached, when it inclines very rapidly. The age of 14 or 15 marks the close of a period of comparatively large

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mortality. Consequently, the number of young people after this seeming tide-turning age has been passed remains reasonably constant. Therefore, practices acquired in the period of early adolescence have a chance to become the established practices among a people whose lives are sustained throughout the period of strongest vitality--from 15 to 45 years among rural females.

It is not only important that the work be started early enough in life to make it of most value throughout the longest possible life period, but the avenue of approach should be seriously considered. The great majority of people, whether of the immediate present or of many years ago, early leave the public schools where much of the appeal to the mind is made through a process of reasoning. Inasmuch as inherited instincts carry the habits of a race, those particular instincts which concern the prolonging of life, the rearing of the young, and the assertiveness of the individual, are always in their various phases easy to appeal to without setting up a long or logical reasoning process.

In home-economics extension teaching the self or egoistic instinct is appealed to through suggestion: "That schoolgirl complexion", "The style of dress reduces the stout appearance", "The figure of the goods does not emphasize the slimness of the individual." An appeal of this kind saves many an argument for a dressmaker or a dietitian. Such expressions as "Meat for health", "Milk makes men", "Vim, vigor, and vitamins", all make an appeal to the desire to be strong, healthy, and to live long. Because of such expressions thousands of people have changed their diet. Their motive for so doing is not based on a long reasoning process, but comes from the appeal to that instinctive desire to live long and be healthy. Such suggestions as "Proper heights of working surfaces", "Water in the home", "Let the engine or current do your washing", have an appeal to the same motive. Little or no argument is necessary. In the last three suggestions there is an added motive--that of economy or saving. Though it is commonly known as a hoarding instinct, it has many phases to which an appeal may just as easily be made, such as the making of money, saving steps, lessening effort, and providing foods for nonproducing seasons.

Imitation, also, is a manifestation of such a strongly inherited instinct to do as others do that it is extremely easy to appeal to. The demonstration idea of teaching is founded largely in the thought that if a proper practice is set up before the eyes of people they are more likely to imitate it than they are when the whole process is discussed with them in a logical way. Seeing and doing are believing. The seeing, and the doing of better practices come rather impulsively, and are perhaps, without much question, the best ways to appeal to people. The advertiser has used pictures, exhibits, window demonstrations, slogans, songs, slides, motion pictures, and all such means as make appeals through the eye, ear, or touch. The power of suggestion rather than reason is always the strong appeal to the mass of the people, and should be resorted to in a large measure if our extension work in home economics is to have the far-reaching effects expected of it.

If we are not careful we find ourselves reasoning within a circle of susceptible persons, but each year's increment to this circle is somewhat offset by the mortality within the circle. The newcomers to this circle of susceptibles are counted as additional persons who practice what is advocated, but little note has been made of those who have passed away.

Agencies must be used whereby everybody is appealed to. If the use of vegetables is to be considered as necessary to the human diet, every means or agency such as pictures of healthy boys and girls or exhibits of the most nutritious vegetables should be shown. Songs should be parodied to set forth the merits of vegetables as food. Slogans should be heard from every lip. News items, carrying particular reference to the health-giving qualities of vegetables, as illustrated in the health and vigor of the young people eating them, should be used. Store windows should be used for such exhibits as will associate themselves with the business conducted. The same idea should be carried through every avenue of appeal suggesting the use of any particular thing, whether it be in home management, clothing, diet, or health.

It is believed that by beginning the work earlier and by making a bombardment of suggestions, the way may be made easier for the masses to accept what many times is tediously and not always understandingly presented through the reasoning process. I do not wish to be understood as placing little value on the use of reasoning; use it, but use other means and agencies also, for with the rank and file of humanity they will be far more successful. If we do not lead in this matter, let us take our cue from what successful business is doing today in every form of advertisement that makes an appeal through the power of suggestion to induce people to do, to be, or to buy.

